

MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
July 28, 2016 – 5:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Present: Preka, Young, Cote, Mathanool, Legnos
Absent: Vignato, Dowling, Hatcher
Other: Obrey, Valente, Nault, Smith
Staff: Bronk, Eisenbeiser, Post

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.

II. ITEM OF BUSINESS

1. Kelly offered a brief introduction and how he would run the workshop. Kelly stated they were going to go through each of the 6 priorities and would talk about what each priority meant to the EDC.

Outreach with Town Council, Commissions, and subdivisions- Legnos felt it was continued communication between staff and commissions, businesses etc. Valente agreed but felt it was important that people regularly speak at different meetings (GBA, RTM, other commissions etc.) and not just attend but be active participants. Mathanool stated that the EDC was supposed to meet with Town Council quarterly but it isn't something they have done, this is something they should do. Staff does meet regularly with Town Council but the commission does not. Mathanool suggested being present at the RTM as well. Nault feels Staff does a great job communicating, she feels there is a lack of cooperation with subdivisions and a disconnect with the city. Cote still has the priorities that pre date the current priorities and isn't sure why business outreach wasn't better defined in their current priorities.

Kelly asked everyone what role they play regarding Outreach. Bronk says the EDC is good with supporting staff with the budget process or any hot button topics. The EDC writes letters of support and does show up to be supportive during necessary times and will speak to show support when needed. Valente suggested changing the first priority "Outreach" to "Communication" within the priorities and have the "Outreach" section refer to outreach with businesses. Legnos stated that staff has done a great job communicating with Council, RTM etc. he suggested one person from the EDC show up to various meetings rotating amongst the commission members. Nault suggested one person go to at least every City EDC meeting, they could rotate all members of the Town EDC. Preka agrees the EDC members are good with supporting Town Council on big things but they need to work more on building relationships with other commissions. He suggested having an EDC liaison to other groups like the EDC has from Town Council, RTM, GBA, and DMMA. Kelly suggested looking at a calendar to see how many meetings there are, how many members there are and logistically look at how to move forward getting everyone involved in attending meetings.

Take Action on Recommendations in the Market Analysis- Kelly asked how much strategic discussion there was in the group regarding the Market Analysis. Bronk states there are some things they have discussed, like marketing and promotions. The standalone website will be the anchor to launch all marketing; it will be a major effort and Staff will be looking for feedback from the EDC. Young views the item as they would discuss different projects the EDC can assist with once the recommendations from the Market Analysis was completed. The EDC would take the lead from Staff about what things they could do to help and what the priorities are for the things they can help with. Young states they can start to look at these now because they are at that point the Market Analysis process. Regarding not relying on the "Big 3" Valente said GBA is getting the word out to businesses about the incubation centers where we might be able to get some smaller businesses to launch from. Kelly says that more of a shift needs to take place, maybe have a one page marketing piece to get the word out about these incubation centers. Preka thinks that as a group there are great ideas but taking action is what they lack, Preka says once they takeover they need to deliver and need to be consistent.

Cote touched on the monthly management activity, it is better to do a few things and be focused then get lost, and he would like to make a difference in one or two smaller areas then try to tackle many things. Bronk mentioned that there is an action plan in the Market Analysis with priorities listed near projects of high, med, low as a guide.

Develop Business Incentive Portfolio-

Cote stated his impression was that this was the various incentives that are available to businesses. This would include a description as well as the requirements that the businesses must meet to apply for an incentive and who is offering the incentive (the Town, State, etc.). Cote stated that there are many incentives and they then to be confusing. He would like to see a clear document to provide to businesses. It would be best to show an easy read summary of incentives or programs that are offered. This would be helpful in conveying what is out there when doing business outreach. Cote does not feel that the commission would be the ones to develop the portfolio.

Young states that this is on as a priority because it had been discussed over the last 2 years. Initially before the current Staff the EDC thought they would produce this document but now it will be handled on a Staff level. Valente stated that the most common thing mentioned in the Market Analysis was diversification, we need to show what assets we have and what can we offer to businesses looking to expand or come to Groton that sets the Town apart. Legnos states it is also important to understand the business you are dealing with so that you may offer the best incentives for that particular business. Bronk agrees that there are a lot of incentive programs out there and they aren't written in a way that anyone could easily understand. They are generic and staff is trying to translate them to make it easier. Eisenbeiser is currently working on the project. He is looking to make a stand-alone document taking info from other towns, looking at formatting to see what is available and trying to put it into a user friendly document that can be handed out.

Nault is clarifying that what staff is working on and discussing is already established incentives. She interprets this priority as coming up with new incentives to offer. Bronk states that we can try to modify the ones we have control over like the economic assistance fund as an example.

Identify and promote development opportunities in both private and Town owned properties- Cote said that the potential for the Oral School with the right developer and plan could be one of the best opportunities in this area as a tax base for revenue. Bronk says it is the largest property in Groton and currently the Town is not receiving taxes on the property. Mathanool asked how bad the property was in terms of ready to be used, Bronk said it is one of the better ones he has seen. Mathanool had referred a prep school that may be interested. Bronk states that we are keeping a log of interested parties. Young interprets this priority as being similar in priority number three (develop a business incentive portfolio) as a supportive role by the EDC to the OPDS. Kelly asked about the process of identifying, assessing, selling, permitting, and developing within the process and where the best place to bring in the EDC for help is. Young says they could attempt to find interested parties for the properties, Bronk agrees that EDC can help with that.

Bronk says the Town will advertise and put an information sheet out and inform the community so they may understand the process. There is a lot of misinformation and rumors, the EDC can help to mitigate those things and speak to the truths of the process. Young says that they can meet with Staff to inform them of things they hear when they are out and how best to address.

Nault states that infrastructure is a need. We have a lot of properties that are in a prime location but have no infrastructure. Nault suggested the EDC go to a Town Council meeting and recommend infrastructure. Cote has a business in an area that needs infrastructure; in the strategic planning it states this as a top priority. Funds were given for this but with the recession from 2008-2012 the Town wasn't going to put the money towards so it is still something that needs to be addressed.

Cote stated that the priorities have to line up with the strategic goals and plans over the 10 years. Cote stated that when he read in the paper that Electric Boat was going to spend money in this area he immediately asked how much was going to be spent here in our area. It was stated that of the 1.5 billion dollars about a half billion dollars will be spent in Groton during their 5 year plan. Mathanool said for the next 5-7 years the Town should be focused on businesses that support Electric Boat's development and market for the need for businesses to relocate and set up in Groton to support Electric Boat. There will be more revenue from different companies that are technology related with different skill sets. Mathanool stated they should stay focused on that and bring in those ancillary businesses.

Legnos says that south eastern Connecticut doesn't really count in terms of the State, someone from the Town needs to communicate with the State to get more funding for Southeastern Connecticut. The State doesn't have any idea on how to pigeon hole that funding and the Town needs to tap into the manufacturing money. Bronk states that bringing in the businesses is great but if people aren't living in the community then you aren't fully driving the economy. Mixed use development is as important to keep workers here in Groton. The Town has been approached about dealing with Tax Increment Financing (TIF). Young asked what the EDC can do to help with this. Bronk stated Staff needs complete support when bringing this to the Town Council; they can attend Town Council meetings, promote TIF and link them to developing projects. Nault stated that the vote of support the EDC gave for the Economic Assistance fund for Gabriele's made a difference with the Town Councils vote. They took that into consideration with their own vote so that type of support makes a difference. Bronk needs the EDC to play a similar supporting role that the EDC made

during the presenting of the budget when they present TIF. Kelly stated that it should be clarified what questions would come up when speaking about TIF and the process. Bronk said they will educate the EDC on this subject.

Develop Metrics to gauge progress in business development and retention- Young gave the history of how this priority came about. The EDC was trying to come up with a way of measuring how they are doing as a commission, if they are staying on track, a way to track and compare over time. Legnos stated they can look at what was done with outreach. Kelly stated that there are 2 metric outcomes, how did you affect change, and the other metric is doing your job, how many people did you talk to, how many businesses did you visit, how many meetings did you get to during a period of time etc. Legnos states it's the effort that is put in and the results of that effort. Cote stated that they made a difference during the budget and that is something that they can measure. Preka says that their consistency needs to be measured. There needs to be a balance with attending meetings and business outreach and they need to be consistent, consistency is key. Young wanted a roadmap of what was expected or what they would commit to during the month between each meeting. Nault suggested a sheet used to track businesses that were visited or meetings that were attended that are turned in each month. Preka suggested a line item on the agenda each month where the commission members would discuss what they did during the month. Nault and Preka suggested using Doodle for important meetings and business outreach, members can sign up for meetings so everyone will know they are covered or not covered.

Identify how the EDC's discretionary fund can best support OPDS economic development efforts in time to submit a monetary request for the 2016/2017 budget cycle- Kelly offers his opinion that if the EDC does priorities 1-5 that it will result in them doing number 6. Young stated that in the description of the EDC, it states that there is a discretionary fund where funds may be given to the EDC from a percentage on the grand list. It is money that they have to request but it is a state statute that the EDC can use money to support what OPDS needs. Preka states that Bronk requested they submit a budget for the EDC. Young wants it on the agenda to look at creating a budget. Bronk says that Staff has been resistant to this and asked for an itemized budget because without knowing what exactly the money is for funds won't be approved. Bronk also said that his interpretation of the statute is that it was put in place for municipalities that don't have a budget for Economic Development and Groton's Town Council is very supportive of Economic Development allocating the funds that the department felt it needed to be effective. Legnos suggested that if on the new website there was a listing of all the businesses and they can pay to expand how much info is put on there this may be away to have some funds for the EDC.

Kelly asked them to think about their current list of priorities and if there were any changes or additions they felt are important. Cote said he felt that there should be a one page list based on the Strategic Plan that is done every 10 years to have an idea of what the goals would be in year one, year 3, year 5 etc. Cote wants long term goals. Legnos says it needs to happen continuously, a living document that is used and updated regularly. Kelly suggested that 2 or 3

members meet and brainstorm a list and maybe Cote can take the lead on the topic and bring it to the committee.

Kelly stated that he felt the meeting was productive and suggested doing another workshop in the future. All in attendance were receptive to this.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Catherine Young, Secretary
Economic Development Commission

Prepared by Lauren Post
Office Assistant II